

December 20, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to respectfully request that you take immediate action to ensure the availability of critical home energy aid to the millions of American households dependent upon the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Specifically, we ask that you immediately release \$300 million in available contingency LIHEAP funds to the states, support \$1.7 billion in regular LIHEAP funding for Fiscal Years 2003, and provide at least that funding level in your Fiscal Year 2004 budget.

LIHEAP is a safety net for the millions of low-income, elderly and disabled households which receive its energy assistance to survive harsh weather conditions. Compared to last winter, this winter will likely be much more severe for these households and the numbers of households requiring energy assistance is likely to grow due to increased joblessness. The unemployment rate increased from 5.7 percent in October to 6.0 percent in November as the number of unemployed Americans rose by 300,000, to 8.5 million. Consequently, the number of households seeking LIHEAP aid is sure to follow suit.

Furthermore, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicts rising household heating expenditures for heating oil, natural gas, and propane costs over the 2002-2003 heating season. According to EIA, a household that paid \$597 for natural gas during the 2001-2002 heating season will pay \$780 during 2002-2003; the cost of heating oil for a household will rise to \$909 during 2002-2003 compared to \$643 during 2001-2002; and propane will rise to \$1036 during 2002-2003 compared to \$887 during 2001-2002. If these predictions hold true, then households will face much higher energy costs this winter just when more Americans are less able to make ends meet.

Economically-distressed households across the nation are at the beginning of a real emergency as states cut spending and report that they are facing their most dire fiscal situation since World War II. Local officials in Chicago estimate that approximately 20,000 LIHEAP-eligible households will not receive any assistance this winter. State officials are preparing to cut approximately 532,000 households unless \$1.7 billion is provided in Fiscal Year 2003. New York State estimates that it will reduce the number of households served by 80,000. Pennsylvania will reduce the number of households served by over 15,000. Oregonians have suffered one of the highest unemployment rates in the country for more than a year, while energy prices have risen by upwards of 50 percent in many parts of the state in just the last year.

Massachusetts will try to retain the number of households served by reducing its maximum benefit by almost 20 percent. Ohio will reduce its average benefit by more than 17 percent. This pattern is being reflected by states across the nation and the situation will only grow worse without your immediate attention.

No one should ever be forced to make a decision between heat and food, or heat and housing, or heat and health care. Therefore, we request that you release contingency LIHEAP assistance to the states, support \$1.7 billion in regular LIHEAP funding in Fiscal Years 2003, and support at least that funding level in your Fiscal Year 2004 budget. This is necessary to ensure that states can help low-income, elderly, and disabled families keep warm in their homes.

Sincerely,

Jack Quinn (NY-30)  
Jesse Jackson, Jr. (IL-02)  
John McHugh (NY-24)  
Sherwood Boehlert (NY-23)  
Tammy Baldwin (WI-02)  
Edward Markey (MA-07)  
Phil English (PA-21)  
Bernard Sanders (VT-AL)  
Robert Andrews (NJ-01)  
Dale Kildee (MI-09)  
Joseph Crowley (NY-07)  
Bart Stupak (MI-01)  
Eliot Engel (NY-17)  
John Dingell (MI-16)  
Ron Kind (WI-03)  
Sherrod Brown (OH-13)  
Tim Johnson (IL-15)  
Peter Visclosky (IN-01)  
Lane Evans (IL-17)  
Ed Towns (NY-10)  
Gary Ackerman (NY-05)  
Maurice Hinchey (NY-26)  
Jim Ramstad (MN-03)  
John Larson (CT-01)  
James Walsh (NY-25)  
Luis Gutierrez (IL-04)  
Michael McNulty (NY-21)

Marty Meehan (MA-05)  
Steven LaTourette (OH-19)  
Rosa DeLauro (CT-03)  
James McGovern (MA-03)  
Michael Castle (DE-AL)  
Mark Green (WI-08)  
Louise Slaughter (NY-28)  
John Olver (MA-01)  
Jerry Costello (IL-12)  
Jose Serrano (NY-16)  
Rob Simmons (CT-02)  
Janice Schakowsky (IL-09)  
James Langevin (RI-02)  
Gerald Kleczka (WI-04)  
Nancy Johnson (CT-06)  
Danny Davis (IL-07)  
Bobby Rush (IL-01)  
Patrick Kennedy (RI-01)  
Henry Hyde (IL-06)  
William Delahunt (MA-10)  
Vito Fosella (NY-13)  
Mike Doyle (PA-18)  
Sander Levin (MI-12)  
Bill Pascrell, Jr. (NJ-08)  
Ted Strickland (OH-06)  
Marcy Kaptur (OH-09)  
Richard Neal (MA-02)

John Shimkus (IL-20)  
Jerrold Nadler (NY-08)  
Julia Carson (IN-10)  
Tom Allen (ME-01)  
David Obey (WI-07)  
Vernon Ehlers (MI-03)  
Frank LoBiondo (NJ-02)  
James Leach (IA-01)  
Tim Holden (PA-06)  
John Tierney (MA-06)  
Phil English (PA-21)  
Stephanie Tubbs Jones (OH-11)  
Carolyn Maloney (NY-14)  
Bill Shuster (PA-09)

Martin Olav Sabo (MN-05)  
Earl Blumenauer (OR-03)  
John LaFalce (NY-29)  
Frank Pallone (NJ-06)  
Charles Bass (NH-02)  
Barney Frank (MA-04)  
Nita Lowey (NY-18)  
Joseph Hoeffel (PA-13)  
James Oberstar (MN-08)  
Carolyn McCarthy (NY-04)  
Peter King (NY-03)  
William Lipinski (IL-03)  
Paul Kanjorski (PA-11)